

# ON THE TRAIL OF THE MOTION PICTURE

## Drama That Loses Itself in Atrocities

By Virginia Tracy

For some reason we find it an exceptionally ungrateful task to "register disappointment" in "The Unpardonable Sin." Perhaps this is because anything that restores Blanche Sweet to us has already earned our gratitude; perhaps we suspect our own imagination as a wet blanket, already too sodden with five years of deluge in blood and atrocities, in rape and counter rape, ever to take fire again. Then have we any right to ask that a picture shall be greater than the book from which the picture is taken?

Yet that is exactly what any picture dealing with scattered individual actions gathering together into one immense and supreme motion has got to be—an intensified, dramatized, high-relief projection of the story's theme, its spirit, the story, and something more; a happy thought for the author contemplating a scenario of "War and Peace." To grapple thus with the story of the invasion of Belgium was indeed the task for a giant; it came to be too much for Rupert Hughes and it has proved too much for Marshall Neilan.

Taking all this into account, we still believe that we have a reasonable case against the picture in that it partakes lavishly of the book's faults and scarcely at all of its often extraordinary virtues. For instance:

It will be remembered that the novel opens with the household of old Mrs. Windsor and her son, Noll—the American son of a German-American mother—who live in a mid-Western town. These two are for the first time a trifle alienated from their America because it is so bitter against the Germans and believes so easily the vile stories told of them in Belgium. With his mother in mind, Noll begins even to quarrel in public in Germany's defense; yet must his country take sides so violently in a European quarrel? It hasn't got anything to do with America, anyhow! Then one October evening in such an American small town street, before his so middle-class American porch, with his mother sitting rocking on it—there drops to earth a fainting girl. She is carried into Noll's house, where every medical aid and experiment fail to wake her; she is in a trance of suspended animation, brought on by some vital shock; she has been literally scared out of her wits. There she continues to lie in the much shaken household of the good Windsors, a mystery in a commonplace life, herself all elegance and beauty; a little sleeping princess, who fires the slow fancy of a rather stolid youth to that pitch

of romantic devotion in which all he lives for is the moment when she shall speak and tell him who has hurt her. Then, while she is still mute, there is at last found hidden in her money-belt the letter which reveals to him that this American princess of his is simply another victim of the Belgium invasion; that when she was struck down in the streets of her own country and before his own house it was the fist of Germany which had reached far enough to strike her. Germany's champion looks up from the dreadful letter to the face of his first love and the dumb witness continues to testify.

Now, if this is not dramatic, what is? And what becomes of its drama if the picture opens with Mr. Noll Windsor already so deeply roused against Germany's villainy and Belgium's wrongs as to be departing for the relief of the latter country forthwith? When the girl comes along she is merely like something extra thrown in. Then the whole middle-class, commonplace background for the lovely bird of passage to shine against Mr. Neilan, in an apparent desire for clearness, for compression, for getting coming events promptly and positively planted, has been cut out at a stroke. And in this clearness and promptness he has allowed even the absorbing mystery of the girl herself somehow to evaporate. If he was at all influenced by the desirability of concentrating the interest on his star instead of on his hero's state of mind we think he took the wrong turning for his own goal; the emotional medium through which a heroine is presented being surely as important to the impression she makes upon us as anything she herself can do; particularly when she is in a trance and can't do anything.

This incident typifies to us the handling of the picture which has somehow let slip the high dramatic temper of the book's earlier part. And when the book itself collapses into an endless quagmire of atrocities Mr. Neilan has been unable to gather Major Hughes's evidence into one great funeral march of accusation or to dramatize it into a single representative and memorable gesture. We remember Wells saying that Henry James sought expression for the minutest thought, like an elephant who has lost a pea and goes diligently searching—"I must have that pea!" As to the smallest detail of Belgium's misery, Major Hughes must have had that pea, and as the worst has been told at the beginning we seem listening to cries for sympathy, declaring: "They murdered my family and burned down my house and stole my pocketbook and dirtied my front steps and left my gate open!" Mr. Neilan has attempted to make his way through this crescendo of distracted writhings, given it up and substituted low comedy.

A slangy guttersnipe from Kansas gloriously bearding the Germans and requiring a funny-five of cheap subtitles becomes the real hero; never was anything better calculated to smash what little illusion we may have, more obviously lugged in to allow the tragedy a few good laughs. Now no living creature need pretend to admire Charlie Chaplin more than we do, but we should not welcome him jumping back and forth over the bed in the last act of "Othello." In fact, it seems largely this tendency to play it both ways which deprives the picture of any continuity whatever. It must keep its horrors within bounds of the most delicate



DOROTHY GISH  
"THE UNPARDONABLE SIN"



MAXINE ELLIOTT  
"THE UNPARDONABLE SIN"



GERALDINE FARRAR  
AND  
LOU TELLEGEN



MAJOR RUPERT HUGHES  
"THE UNPARDONABLE SIN"



ETHEL CLAYTON  
"THE UNPARDONABLE SIN"

### New Films at the Theatres

At the Rivoli Theatre Dorothy Gish will have an opportunity to display her talent as a comedienne in her latest Paramount picture, "I'll Get Him Yet." Richard Barthelmess is the leading man.

A feature of the programme will be the ballet arranged by Adolf Bolm. In its Italian setting of the eighteenth century, designed by John Wenger, it suggests the carnival in Venice. The dancers will be Margaret Leera, Edwin Strawbridge and Gaird Lesley. The music is the third in the series of Liszt's "Caprice Valses" based on a theme from "Lucia di Lammermoor." A comedy, a Prizma of Glacier Park, and the Rivoli Pictorial will complete the bill. The musical programme will consist of Suppe's "Pique Dame" overture. James Harrod will sing Kreisler's "The Old Refrain."

Ethel Clayton in "The Woman Next Door" will be shown at the Strand Theatre. It is an adaptation of Carolyn Wells's novel "Vicky Van." "Isasco Makes Her Bow" is the title of a new Chester-Quinn travel scenic. A new "Analysis of Motion" subject will also be shown, as will a comedy, the Strand Pictorial Review, edited by Director Plunkett, and "Topics of the Day." The vocalists for the week are Redfern Hollinshead, the popular Canadian tenor, and the Strand Ladies' Quartette. Ralph H. Brigham and Herbert Sisson will render selections on the grand pipe organ and the Symphony Orchestra will play excerpts from "The Fortune Teller." Carl Edouarde and Alois Reiser will conduct.

"Broken Blossoms," the new Griffith picture, is being shown at George M. Cohan's Theatre.

Pauline Frederick in "One Week of Life" will be seen at the Rialto. The play has been arranged for the screen by Willard Mack. In the company are Thomas Holding, Sydney Ainsworth and Corinne Barker.

A Sunshine comedy, "The Bell Hop's Secret," the Rialto Magazine and a scenic of Norway will supplement the feature.

Hugo Riesenfeld has prepared an attractive musical programme for the Rialto. It will include Tschakowsky's "Romeo and Juliet" overture, a violin cello by Leonard Van Dyke, who will play Popper's "Tarentella," and the trio from "William Tell," sung by Martin Brefel, Edouard Albano and Emanuel List.

Blanche Sweet in "The Unpardonable Sin" is seen at the Broadway.

The features scheduled for this week at Loew's New York Theatre and Roof will be Geraldine Farrar in "The Stronger Vow," on Monday; J. Warren Kerrigan in "The Best Man," on Tuesday; Maxine Elliott in "The Eternal Magdalene," on Wednesday; Tom Mix in "The Coming of the Law," on Thursday; Mary MacLaren in "The Unpainted Woman" and Margarita Fisher in "Charge It to Me," on Friday; Zena Keefe in "The Amateur Widow," on Saturday, and Hale Hamilton in "Full of Pep," on Sunday.

The L. E. Waterman Company has bought out the entire house for tomorrow evening's performance of "Trials of Faith" at the Harris Theatre, and will distribute the tickets among its employees. The management also announces that the seats for the evening performance of May 23 have been bought by the Rotary Club.

Lucy Cotton in Max Marcin Film

Gerald Bacon announces that he has signed Lucy Cotton for his first production, a screen version of Max Marcin's play, "Substitute Prisoner," entitled "Sunup," which will be started next week at the Bacon-Backer studio. It was previously announced that Mr. Bacon had titled the Marcin play "At Sunrise," but it was learned that Smith & Golden bearing the same title. In deference to Messrs Smith & Golden Mr. Bacon has changed the title to "Sunup."

### AMUSEMENTS

**PALISADES PARK**  
OPPOSITE WEST 130 ST. FERRY  
NOW OPEN—New Sensations Galore

## What Rupert Hughes Thinks Of "The Unpardonable Sin"

By Harriette Underhill

The unpardonable sin in our eyes is not remembering people. Before F. P. A. reminded us that the expression of such a thought put you in a class with Dulcinea we used to say proudly "We can't always remember names, but we never forget faces." But now we say it no longer. We just pride ourselves on it and it gives the same superior feeling which comes with owning a large family tree or wearing fine silk things underneath. But pride goes before a fall, as Dulcinea also would say, and last week we didn't remember Major Rupert Hughes.

We made his acquaintance at the same time that we met Rex Beach, but that was a long time ago and so many things have happened among them the war, which made Rupert Hughes Major Rupert Hughes.

But the strange part of it is that with the title our whole conception of Mr. Hughes changed and when we read that "The Unpardonable Sin" was written by Major Hughes we forgot to connect him with Rupert Hughes.

So, when we went to have tea with Major Hughes at the Commodore, we stepped off the elevator and looked around for a large man with a sandy mustache, wearing an army coat with scrolly braid all over the sleeves—something like General Pershing—we found out afterward was what was reposing in our subconscious mind.

And then a pleasant looking man in a dark tweed suit stepped up to us and said, "Miss Underhill? I am Mr. Hughes!"

"But," we said, "aren't you Major Hughes, and where is your uniform? We never should have known you!"

"People do not wear their uniforms indefinitely, you know, and I have been in mufti for some time now."

We were terribly disappointed, for we do love uniforms, but we were really quite pleasant about it and consented to have some cinnamon toast and tea.

What we really intended to talk about was how Major Hughes liked making plays for reproduction on the screen and particularly what he thought of "The Unpardonable Sin" as a screen play.

But it is so hard to talk business when there are so many other things, and so we let screen plays repose in the office while we talked about Washington (the city, not George) and Rex Beach and Heywood Brown and Frank Adams and Blanche Bates and George Creel and the war and prohibition; and then we suddenly discovered that if one was going to the Griffith opening one must dress for dinner, so we asked Major Hughes without any preamble what he thought of the new picture. In fact, we jumped from George Creel to "The Unpardonable Sin" without so much as a comma.

"When one consents to have his story made into a motion picture," said Major Hughes, "he must expect to see something quite different from anything which he himself conceived. The people who play the parts are bound to look unlike his characters, and, as a rule, the director does anything he chooses with the story to make it suitable for the screen."

"But I must say that Marshall Neilan has followed my story of 'The Unpardonable Sin' as closely as it is possible to have done."

And Blanche Sweet's work is nothing short of marvellous. I do not know any one who can portray the human emotions as vividly as Miss Sweet. I have suggested that one of those analysis of motion pictures where the

action is slowed down to one-eighth the normal would be a wonderful way of showing people how she cries. It isn't a matter of simply making the tears come, but she is absolutely convulsed with grief when she cries. It is very interesting. I should like to know how she does it!"

And we smiled at Major Hughes's naivete. Just as though any man ever could hope to know how she does it or why! There are at least fifty-seven different reasons, and one of them is when you stay at tea so late that you haven't time to put on your new gown to wear to the Griffith opening.

### Making People Laugh Is Serious Work, Says Manne

There are two kinds of people, those who think cartoons are funny and those who do not.

Some people will be convulsed over the social aspirations of the rivals of the Joneses; others think that a couple of strange looking children putting a tack on papa's chair is just the funniest drawing on earth. As for us, we never could get up much enthusiasm over some June bugs with shoes and hats on capering about under an apple tree, and we always thought that it was an awful waste of good material to present Mutt and Jeff and Bobby Bumps and such-like on the screen.

And then we stayed for the cartoon at the Rivoli one Sunday and thought it was the funniest thing we ever had listened to. We use that word "listen" advisedly, as all will know who have sat through a comedy at the Rivoli.

In the orchestra is a drummer named Max Manne who has the soul of Beethoven and the humor of Mark Twain. The cartoons, as presented on the screen, seemed dull old things to him just as they did to us, so he set about improving them.

He had at hand a number of musical instruments which will make queer sounds like a man being kicked, for instance, or trembling with fright or laughing. Manne experimented with these and every one was delighted. He made the funny little silhouettes live and breathe, and then he became ambitious. He added to his collection of instruments, and those he could not purchase he made.

If you never have seen a Rivoli comedy go and see one and listen to the orchestral effects. Manne puts on all of these comedies himself. We were so delighted with them that we wanted to see the "little drummer boy" at close range and find out if he had a sense of humor or if those effects just happened. And, as ever, this professional humorist is serious and hard working, just like F. P. A. or Irvin Cobb. Nothing that he does just happens.

Hugo Riesenfeld invited us one day to lunch with him at Rector's the other day last week, and we talked it over. And Manne told us that he tried each effect again and again until he felt that it would get over.

"Sometimes I work all night over a picture, and in the cold, gray dawn I fall exhausted, exclaiming: 'There! I think that is quite funny!'" And then Mr. Manne told us of a scheme which he has to fit a cartoon around his musical effects. It has already been approved by Bud Fisher, and, furthermore, it has received our sanction. As G. B. S. used to say, "It's a bear."

H. U.

### AMUSEMENTS

**LOEW'S NEW YORK THEATRE & ROOF**  
Cont. 11 A. M. to 11 P. M. Roof to 1 A. M.  
BERT LUTHELL, "The Lion's Den."  
Loew's American Roof, 425 St. West of B'way  
BEGINNING TO-MORROW (Mon.) 10:15  
"EVILY SAILOR" (11 P. M.) All Seats  
RESERVED  
F. L. SHERMAN, M. A. N. Reserved  
HYMAN, 7 Other Big Act. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

## Shadows on the Screen

Doris Kenyon has a namesake in Calcutta. Her name is Doris Kenyon Vernues.

Please explain what all this "when B. C. W. D." means. It seems a bit confusing!

Eugene O'Brien's first starring vehicle for Selznick bears the perfect title, "The Perfect Lover."

Alice Joyce wrote the sketch which Joyce and Lewis are presenting at the Palace. Half of the team is Alice's brother.

Charles Ray is learning to play the piano and to be a prizefighter. He has to do both in his next picture. He is in training with Colleen Moore and Al Kaufmann.

Gladden James, who enjoyed such a pronounced success opposite Alice Joyce in "The Third Degree," has been engaged to play in a new Harry Moray picture now under production.

Elliott Dexter is to be starred under the Famous Players-Lasky banner. Mr. Dexter's contract covers a period of years. His first picture will be "The Admirable Crichton," the first play of Sir James M. Barrie to reach the screen.

Clare Briggs, our own cartoonist, with the assistance of his movie troupe, established a record for Victory Note sales in front of the Aeolian Building on Forty-second Street last week, when \$25,000 worth of Victory Notes were sold to the admiring populace.

Bryant Washburn wears an unusu-

ally good-looking suit in "Love Asks a Question."

"What sort of goods is that?" asked some one.

"English sun cloth," he returned. "I wear it because I like the shade."

A certain attractive house in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles, is being put into apple pie order and holiday attire. Ruth Stouffer has wired her friends in Hollywood that she is about to return to the land of sunshine after a year spent in New York when she was working on "The Master Mystery."

Under the supervision of Harry Levy, the Universal Industrial Department has completed a delightful domestic comedy drama entitled "Straight Goods." This production is one of the cleverest bits of farce mixed with moments when the action reaches the dramatic.

Henry B. Warner's first motion picture production since joining the forces of Jesse D. Hampton in California will be released some time in June. The picture is "The Man Who Turned White," written by E. McGraw Willis, and prepared for screening by George Elwood Jenkins. Jesse D. Hampton personally directed this play, which is a story of life in Arabia.

"The Petal on the Current," the Fannie Hurst Cosmopolitan novelette, in which Mary MacLaren will star, is being directed by Tod Browning. Miss MacLaren's leading man will be Robert Anderson, who first rose to prominence as Monsieur Cuckoo in the Griffith production, "Hearts of the World." Fritzie Ridgeway and Ina Claire are in support of the star.

### AMUSEMENTS

**ROOSEVELT**  
Was 100% Right  
He Said!

**THE UNPARDONABLE SIN**

IS A VERY, VERY STRONG STORY. IT TEACHES JUST THE LESSON OUR PEOPLE SHOULD LEARN.

SEE IT AND JUDGE FOR YOURSELF

NOW 4<sup>th</sup> BIG BROADWAY Theatre  
IN ITS 4<sup>th</sup> WEEK  
DAILY (INCL. SUNDAY) NOON TO 11 P. M.—NO ADVANCE IN PRICES

**Rivoli** Broadway at 49th St.

**Rialto** Broadway at 42nd St.

Direction HUGO RIESENFELD  
BEGINNING TO-DAY 1 P. M.

**DOROTHY GISH**  
in a Paramount Picture  
"I'll Get Him Yet"

**BOLM BALLET**  
Prizma—Glacier Park

**LYDD COMEDY**  
"Back to the Woods"

**RIVOLI ORCHESTRA**  
"Piano Dance" Overture

**PAULINE FREDERICK**  
in a Famous Picture  
"One Week of Life"

**RIALTO MAGAZINE**  
"Northern Norway"—Educational Film

**SUNSHINE COMEDY**  
"A Little Bell Rings Sweetly"

**RIALTO ORCHESTRA**  
"Romeo and Juliet" Overture

**STRAND**  
A National Institution  
B'WAY at 47th St. Direction JOS. L. PLUNKETT  
COMMENCING TO-DAY—JESSE LASKY presents

**ETHEL CLAYTON**  
"THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR"

OUTING CHESTER SCENIC  
SENSATIONAL ANIMAL COMEDY  
"ROARING LIONS & MONKEYSHINES"  
REDFERN HOLLINSHEAD  
"The Lion's Den"  
CARL EDUARDE  
Conductor

AMUSEMENTS

JESSE L. LASKY Presents

**FIRES OF FAITH**

EUGENE CATHERINE RUBY  
O'BRIEN CALVERT de REMER

**The Finest Photoplay of the Year**

A Tremendous Story of a Woman's Regeneration  
Produced by Famous Players-Lasky Corp.  
Directed by Edward Tamm  
Screenplay by Charles R. Whitaker

**HARRIS THEATRE**  
42d St. W. of B'way.  
TWICE DAILY  
Mats. at 2:20—2:40 & 8:00.  
Even. at 8:20—8:40 to 11.  
Net Receipts to Salvation Army  
Home Service Fund.

BROOKLYN AMUSEMENTS

**MAJESTIC** Matinee Wed. & Sat.  
Week Beginning To-Morrow Eve.  
Messrs. LEE & J. J. SHUBERT Present

**A SLEEPLESS NIGHT**

A Farce Comedy in Three Acts.  
Original Bijou Theatre, N. Y. Production and Cast, Includes  
PROBY HOPKINS, ERNEST GLENDINING, DONALD GALLAGHER, WILLIAM MORRIS, JOSEPHINE DEAKS and CARLOTTA MONTERKY.

COMING Next Sunday MAY 25  
THE MOST TALKING PICTURE OF ALL TIMES  
BLANCHE SWEET  
in Rupert Hughes  
**THE UNPARDONABLE SIN**  
Night. 2:40 to 11. Mats. 1:50 to 8:00.

**MONTAUK** Mats. Wed. & Sat.  
Klaw & Erlinger and George C. Tyler Present

**ALEXANDRA CARLISLE**  
In BOOTH TARKINGTON and JULIAN STREET'S Comedy  
**THE COUNTRY COUSIN**  
and the Same Cast.  
With ALFRED LUNT

AMUSEMENTS

**GEO. COHAN** Theatre B'way 43 St.  
Second Big Week  
M. 2:40 Twice Daily 8-10

**D. W. GRIFFITH**

**REPERTORY SEASON**

"Most beautiful picture we ever have seen or ever expect to see."—Tribune.

"D. W. Griffith has hit the mark."—American.

"Griffith's mastery of picture making."—Herald.

"Most artistic photoplay yet produced."—Eve. Sun.

**'BROKEN BLOSSOMS'**

"A notable achievement."—Sun.

"Art so real one can think only of the classics."—Morning Telegraph.

"Nothing like this ever has been done before."—Globe.

"A masterpiece."—Times.

"Griffith's greatest triumph."—Mail.

"A thing of rare and haunting charm."—Evening Post.

**MATINEE TO-DAY AND EVERY DAY**  
2.40 — 8.40

Seats also on sale at McBrides